



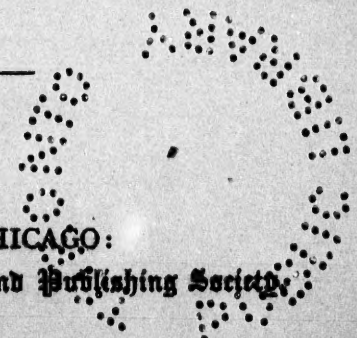
THE
PRINT OF HIS SHOE:
OR,
FOLLOWING CHRIST.

Wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth,
there I have coveted to set my foot too!

— *Bunyan's Pilgrim.*

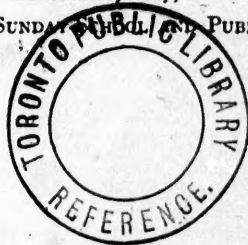
BY THE
REV. WILLIAM WYE SMITH.

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PREFACE.

THE short chapters in this volume were mostly written for the young; but I have found that what is suitable for young persons is generally interesting also to those who are older. A few of the pieces have appeared in *The Sunday-school Times*, Philadelphia, and in the Sunday-school periodicals of Mr. David C. Cook, Chicago; and are reproduced here with the permission of the publishers of those papers. The author hopes his little book may be serviceable to those beginning to follow the footprints of the Master, and to those who are not unwilling to receive counsel from an older pilgrim.

WILLIAM WYE SMITH.

Newmarket, Ontario, 1886.



CONTENTS.

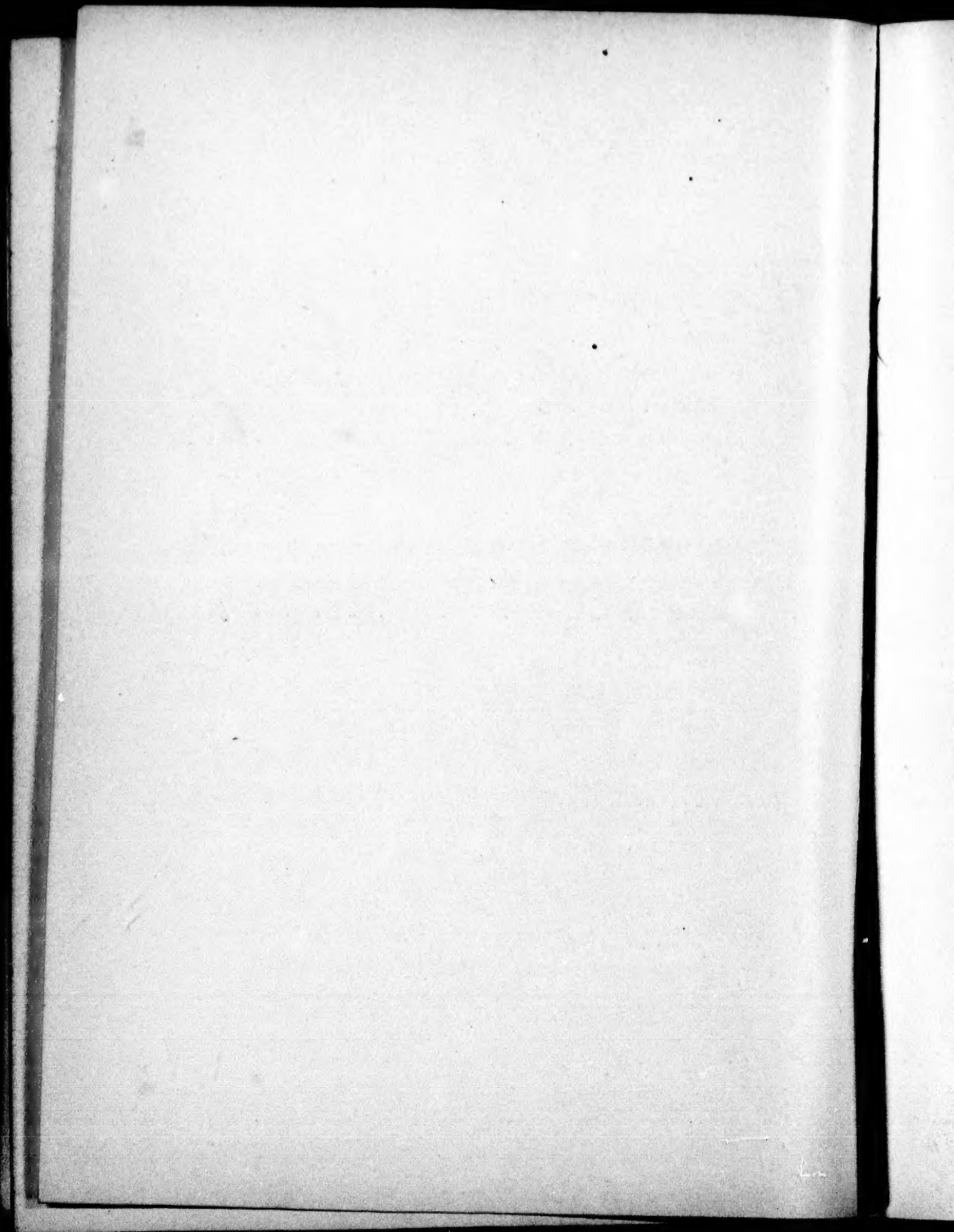
	PAGE
The Print of his Shoe	1
The Likeness of Christ	8
Assurance	12
Indifference	15
Christ's Robe	18
The City Lieth Four-square	22
The Jubilee	26
My Will, Which is Myself	31
The Conscience	35
Acted Parables	39
Reading Between the Lines	42
Enlisting with Christ	47
Crossing the Red Sea	49
Christ Alive	52
One Thing or the Other	54
Thinking in Right Order	56
Justification and Holiness	58

	PAGE
Born from Above	61
The Far-reaching Nature of God's Law	63
The Three-fold Aspect of God's Covenant	69
Good Sayings of Bad Men	71
Dividing our Time	74
Helpers in Prayer	77
Working from Within	80
Sowing and Reaping	82
Jesus on the Cross	84
Christ as a Yoke-fellow	89
Jesus in the Old Testament	92
Providence	95
The Secret Marriage	98
One Rule	101
What Did He Do?	104
Not all Sin Seen at Once	106
Giving God Reasons	109
The End of Sin	111
Conviction through Evidence	113
Only One Among the Rest	115
The Sinner a Covenant-breaker	119
Value of First Impressions	122
The Purpose of Prophecy	124

CONTENTS.

vii

	PAGE
It is Finished!	127
Religion for Use	129
Some One Thing	131
Not only Objecting, but Proposing	134
Tribulation	138
In the Treasury	140
"The Lord is my Shepherd"	142
Daily Bread	144
Among the Standing Grain	147
What Can We Know About Heaven?	150
Memorials	156



THE PRINT OF HIS SHOE.

"I HAVE loved to hear my Lord spoken of," said Mr. Standfast, one of Bunyan's pilgrims, "and wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too." And our one great aim, our one motto and principle all through life, ought to be: "To follow Christ; to please God." A life without an aim is a life frittered away and wasted. And no aim is worthy of having that perishes with the life spent in pursuing it. Our life will never rise unless it has something above itself to rise to.

"But how can I find the print of his shoe? How can I know exactly what pleases him?"

You have his Word. God has given us all that he saw to be necessary and best in the Bible. You will find there, either in general principles or in specific advice and

direction, what the character and acts of a Christian are and should be. And you will find the same in examples given; the best example of all being Christ himself.

"But then there are so many circumstances in which I am placed, where I have no example of Christ. I do not know whether he ever was in such circumstances or not."

Let me see: you are a school-boy of eleven or twelve. Are there any good boys in your school?

"Oh, the boys are all good. At least, they are all pretty fair."

But try to fix upon one who tries to please God; who imitates Christ as far as he can.

"Well, there's Willie Roberts. I think he is about as sure for heaven as any body I know. Yes, I believe Will tries to be like Christ."

It would be easy, would it not, for you to suppose what Willie Roberts would do in

circumstances in which you find yourself, but which you never saw him in?

"Yes, I think so. Now if a fellow wanted to fight Will, I could just think beforehand how he would act. Or if he got an insulting note from somebody, or some one asked him for help in some distress, I think I know just what he would do."

You know how your friend would act in any possible circumstances. If you were equally acquainted with Christ, would you not know how he would speak and act? And would it not be a good exercise for your imagination to dwell on Christ more, and judge from his character what he would do and say in any given case? And you yourself do the same. Wouldn't that be following Christ? Wouldn't that be discovering the print of his shoe, that you might set your foot there too? Do you think that Jesus went to school at your age, as you do?

"I don't know. Probably they hadn't any schools like ours, in Nazareth."

You are right: we can not tell. But we may be certain he mingled with other boys and had at times to stand provocation and injustice. Now, if he were at your school, he would be something like Willie Roberts, only better and more perfect.

"But is it right to talk about Christ that way? to make him so common-like, and bring him right in among us?"

Why, yes. And it is putting Christ so far away from their every-day life that is the trouble with most people in the world. Piety for a death-bed; religion for the inside of churches; Bible-reading for Sunday; every thing else for self and for this world only. I once spoke to an old farmer about his drinking—a man who was very pious on Sunday, and who would have been vexed to be considered any thing else than a Christian. He said he had a long distance to haul his crop of wheat for sale in winter, and found it absolutely necessary to call at a half-way tavern and drink something. I said to him

that Christ went about from place to place, preaching, when he was upon earth, and was very kind and familiar, and talked to people on the way. Now if he should overtake Jesus on the road, and he going to the same market-town, what would he do with him? Why, he would ask him to ride, and give him a good seat on his sleigh, on his bags of wheat. But what would he do when he came to his half-way house? Would he leave Jesus sitting on the load of wheat in the wintry wind, while he himself went into the bar-room for his whisky? Or would he take him into the bar with him?

He interrupted me at this point, and said he "did n't think it was right to talk about our Lord in that way." But he would not answer my question. My dear boy, we need to find Christ's tracks every day in the week. We want to have him with us every-where and at all times. And if it would degrade Christ to be with us and to do as we do, then we are degrading ourselves by going where

Christ would not go, and doing what Christ would not do. Now that is one very good way of finding "the prints of Christ's shoe in the earth." And the habit of thinking, "What would Christ do if he were in my place?" or "What would Christ say if he were here?" — this habit will soon become so strong and fixed that even in dangers and difficulties suddenly arising, the mind will decide at once: "If Christ were in my place he would do so and so"; or, "If Christ were here he would speak thus."

And don't forget, religion is like every thing else: it becomes easier and more perfect as you practice it. The soldier *learns* to march. The step, at first, is too long or too short for him and it is very wearisome always keeping step with the others. But after a time he drops into the confirmed habit; you can tell him by his march, as you see him all alone on the street. And he can't bear now to walk with any body without keeping step with him. And our

renewed nature becomes our only nature. And we are unhappy if for ever so short a time we feel that we have left Christ's footprints. The pilgrim was right who coveted to set his foot wherever Christ had left "THE PRINT OF HIS SHOE."

THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST.

"**S**HOW me," says the worldling, "a man who exhibits in his character and conduct a perfect likeness of Jesus Christ, and then I'll believe that there is something else than hypocrisy among professors." My dear friend, you are too exacting. Your own sons do not show all your characteristics, though each of them shows something of the father. All the world and a great deal more would not equal God; and it takes all the world and a great deal more to image Christ. Yet every Christian, if he *is* a Christian, shows some feature of Christ.

We look at some masterpiece of ancient sculpture, and we say: "There is the perfection of the human figure." But the statue is not the likeness of any one man who ever lived. We may imagine Phidias or Praxiteles loitering around the Olympic or Isthmian

games, taking observations. There the poise of a head would attract him, and draw forth his ready pencil to trace it on some little tablet; there the outline of a bust; there a leg; here a hand; elsewhere, and in detail, the various features of the face—one having the perfection of form in one feature, another in another; till at last, by combining all these in one ideal form, he produced what we all recognize as a perfect representation of a perfect human figure. So with the likeness of Christ among men. You can not find it, or any thing nearly approaching it, in any one man or any one circle of men. But pick out the likeness of Christ among Christians, feature by feature, and there is more of the likeness of the great Master than we imagine.

The sister of a little boy had died. It was before the age of photographs, and no likeness remained of the lost dear one but in the fond memories of her friends. The little brother was inconsolable.

"Could n't somebody paint a picture of sister?"

But the parents reasoned: "But you have no little picture or any thing to show the painter. How could he tell what your sister looked like?"

"I could tell him," said the boy.

At last, to gratify and console the little fellow, he was sent to Boston on a visit to friends, and authorized to make the attempt to find a painter who could produce the likeness of a girl he had never seen and of whom no likeness remained. He went to one painter and then to another. But they shook their heads. At last one, younger perhaps and more enthusiastic, said to the boy:—

"Come with me where we can see many pictures of people, and point out one that looks like your sister."

They went to a gallery of portraits.

"That is like her eyes," he said, pointing to one. "Her hair was like that," he again exclaimed. "Her mouth was like that.

That is her forehead." And thus, feature after feature, he pointed out the likeness of his dead sister. And the painter, by combining all these in one, made a portrait that all her friends said was a perfect image of the loved and lost one. Are we hypocrites because we each can show but some one feature of our blessed Lord?

ASSURANCE.

OUR salvation depends on the meritorious work of Christ, and his truth in telling us of it. But I can not judge of Christ's truth by looking into my own heart. I may find whether I believe him; but his worthiness to be believed is to me a matter of evidence, not of feeling. There is a serious mistake made here by many who have no assurance, because they are not considering "the record that God gave of his Son," but only their own feelings.

I have to cross a bridge. I have heard many conflicting reports about it. I have seen some who had utterly refused to trust themselves on it, while others assert they have gone over it. I am in sight of it, and my trouble increases. Shall I sit down and ask myself: "Am I bold enough to go over it? Shall I risk it?" and stay there till

I get my feelings wrought up to the pitch of rushing over it? No! I have taken up the wrong question. The only sensible question I ought to ask and answer is: "Is the bridge safe? Is it strong enough?" I shall not get these answers out of my feelings. I shall get them out of the right use of my senses and my judgment. I see people passing safely over it. Now that is evidence the bridge is strong enough to bear others. I cautiously and carefully examine the foundations and the superstructure; and the evidence of my eyes pronounces it good. I get acquainted with the builder of it, and find he is a skillful and an honorable man. I take evidence as to dates, and I find it has not lasted yet nearly as long as it is intended to last. On every point and at every turn I find satisfactory evidence. Now I walk over with perfect confidence. I had, in fact, forgotten to think about my feelings. My feelings had to follow my judgment; and my judgment was satisfied.

So about Christ. If you think he is not a safe Saviour, examine his credentials ; test his character ; listen to those who have been saved by him ; find out what his work is and how he does it.

As said an old man in Scotland, who had been converted in his old age and was now dying : " You see, I'll tell you how it is : he *says* it, and I *just believe* it ; and that's all there is about it ! " This is assurance. God says he will save me if I trust Christ. I *do* trust him (I surely know that much about myself), and I know he will keep his word. That is the " assurance of faith," and it is the only kind of assurance the Bible offers me. The modern " Master, we would see a sign from thee," is to look for visions and trances and wondrous ecstatic feelings, and to rely on these.

INDIFFERENCE.

PEOPLE often wish they had "more conviction of sin." Jesus says the Holy Spirit "will convict the world in respect of sin" (Revision), and they wonder why the Spirit is in some way neglecting his duty with them. "If the Holy Spirit would only convict us of sin!" We are "so cold and indifferent."

You are quite cold and indifferent, you say?

"Yes, perfectly cold and dead; frozen up. Oh, if I could only be thawed out!"

Now, if the Holy Spirit began to work with you, as just now you wished he would, where do you think he would *begin*?

"Why, he would begin to make me mourn over my sins, to weep and pray, and lead me to accept Christ's pardon and grace."

He would not, probably, do all these things

at once. He would give you one lesson and insist on your learning that before he gave you another. Is not that what you would do with a scholar you were teaching?

"Yes."

Well, he has given you one important lesson — that you are this moment guilty of a great sin. God has done so much for you, and yet you have no gratitude for him. Christ has died for your sins and yet you do not trust him. Christ loves you, and yet you refuse to love him. He is warm toward you, and yet you are cold toward him. Your coldness and indifference is your sin. The Holy Spirit convinces you of that. Go to Christ with your sin, confess it, forsake it, and be pardoned for it.

Now if, in respect to this life there is something very important told you, you don't stop to think of your feelings about it. Feelings are not consulted in the matter. It is a matter of its being false or being true. If it is true, you will rejoice; if not, you will

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not. And you seek for the evidences. But the evidences are not in you; they are in the facts. Just so in spiritual things. The Bible professes to have good news for you. Your anxiety should not be about your feelings, but about the evidences of truth in the news. If Christ has died for you, believe it and rejoice. And if you do not seem to be sure about that fact, for the sake of your eternal interest and for the sake of Christ himself, whose honor is involved, investigate its truth at once.

CHRIST'S ROBE.

A SOLDIER might still be a soldier, though he had no uniform given him, but was dressed like a citizen, and every soldier according to his own fancy. But a Christian can not be a useful and accepted Christian without Christ's robe. There are many advantages in having soldiers in a distinctive garb. They are known to be soldiers. Each one is known to belong to such and such a regiment or arm of the service; and the men themselves feel that their uniform is an authority and a protection. So "putting on Christ," that is, becoming a professed Christian, is a great advantage to the believer. It reminds him of what he is and it encourages others. But the principal sense in which it is to be understood, is our taking Christ for our moral character in which to stand before God.

Justification is an acquittal from guilt. Paul says: "By whom ye have now received the atonement;" that is, putting on Christ for our justification. It is an acceptance of us as righteous. Now we have no goodness or righteousness of our own; it is all Christ's. And when God looks at us he wants to see if we have Christ's righteousness, just as a commander looks at a man, and knows by his having on the uniform that he is one of his soldiers. So God knows Christ's robe wherever he sees it. It may be on my unworthy shoulders, but if it is Christ's robe, and I am wearing it, I am accepted for the sake of him who has given me the robe to wear.

Hear a little parable. There was a beautiful city, and a good king reigned there, and all the people in it were very happy. But it was pure as well as happy, and it was happy because it was pure. And the law of the city was that no one who was unworthy should come in there. Outside one of the gates

a poor man sat on a stone. He often could see in a little, when the gate was opened ; but he was afraid to try to go in, for he knew he was not worthy. The prince, the king's son, took a walk out and saw this poor man sitting, and spoke kindly to him. He asked him if he would like to go in. He said, Yes, only he was not worthy ; and so it was against the law for him to go in.

"Well," said the prince, "I am worthy, and any body I take in will be accepted and considered as worthy, if he is in my company. So come with me."

So the poor man got up, and the prince put his arm around him and flung one corner of his princely robe over the man's shoulders, so that the one robe covered them both ; and thus they went towards the gate. And when the keepers of the gate saw them coming, they sent word to the king that "the prince was coming, and he had with him a man who was not worthy." And the king gave orders to "admit both the prince

and any man the prince had with him ; for his worthiness made the other worthy."

We need not be afraid that God will fail to recognize the robe of Christ wherever he sees it. Jacob knew Joseph's coat when it came home to him dabbled in blood. "It is my son's coat!" he cried. The father of Lord William Russell knew the headless body of his son, it is said, as he stood by his coffin, and said: "I would not give my dead son for the living son of any man in Christendom." After Richard Cameron had fallen at Ayrs-moss, and his head and hands, before they were nailed up over the gates of Edinburgh, were brought in to his old father, who was in prison for conscience' sake, — with a purpose thus to add to his misery, — and he was asked if he knew whose they were, he took them tenderly in his hands and said: "They are my dear son's. God has been very merciful to me and mine."

And if it is thus with human fathers, will God see his Son's robe on us, and not know it and not accept it?

THE CITY LIETH FOUR-SQUARE.

PROBABLY the principal idea to be gathered from the city's lying four-square is the perfection and symmetry of its plan. It all existed in God's thought from eternity, perfect and holy, and needing no additions or "improvements" like cities of man's building. And the three gates on every side may remind us of the sanctuary in the wilderness in the center of the camp, with three tribes encamped on each side of it—an ancient suggestion of heaven; for Dr. Binney was right when he said that "all Old Testament facts were doctrines;" and all nations and people of the earth may equally come into it and on the same terms.

But perhaps for a moment we might put a finer point upon it still, and say that you may come to God from all the various sides

of human experience and feeling. You may come in at the east gates, with the morning sun upon you, in all the fresh and joyous feelings of a consecrated youth. And happy are they who thus come. What a pity to give the best of our youth to the world, when it might have been given to God! It is a mistake and a loss which we find, all our life, can never be fully repaired.

Or you may come in at the south gates, led by the fervid warmth of your emotions. Mary, she of the alabaster box, came thus. Many people do thus enter by the south gates; more than by the north. Our warm emotions were given us for the very purpose that they should rise up toward God, as the fire ascends towards the sun. And if we begin to be so full of love to God that we can not keep away from him, we shall be glad that the south gates are so invitingly near and so easy of access.

Or you may enter by the north gates, cool and intellectual, compelled to believe by the

overwhelming evidence presented that "Jesus is the Christ." Some men who thus come to God are very strong in faith. As the Holy Spirit, working through their reason, has compelled them to believe, so nothing short of overturning their reason can loosen their hold on Christ.

Or you may enter by the sunset gates, turning back, as it were, almost, but not quite, too late : your whole life a long day of wandering, but getting home at last. The whole path in error ; the last turning only right. How touching is the testimony of some who have thus come to God in old age ! How anxious to make the most of the time that is left, and to warn others to avoid their mistake, and to come in on the eastern side, as the worshipers entered the temple of old.

But thanks be to God, the street from every gate leads to the dazzling center — the throne of God ! There is the same salvation, the same mercy, and the same grace, come when you will. Only, it is present rebellion and

present sin not to come at once ; and there is eternal danger in the delay. The east gates would not have been opened if it had been none of your duty to enter thereby ; and to pass by them is to run the risk of never entering the City at all.

THE JUBILEE.

WHETHER it was every forty-nine years or every fifty years did not so much matter to the poor Hebrew, as to know that it was sure to come at the right time. I think, however, it was every forty-nine years. Every seven years came the Sabbatic year, the year of rest ; and every seven Sabbatic years brought round the great Sabbatic year, the Jubilee.

The land all went back to the old proprietors ; and it taught the people that the land was God's. This family or that family might have it for their "inheritance ;" but after all, they only "occupied" it under the great Proprietor. How a pious Hebrew would think : " My ancestor had this little farm given to him by Joshua, hundreds of years ago. God has restored it to me, and will give it to my children after me. The earth is Jeho-

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vah's, and the fullness thereof." When William Rufus of England was found dead in New Forest, we read in history that a woodman named Purkis took the body in his cart to Winchester. And Henry I gave him, as a reward, two acres of ground where his cottage stood in the forest. And a very dear friend of mine, the Rev. George Purkis, tells me that small estate of two acres has been for eight hundred years in the family, and is in the family still. He himself is a direct descendant of the old woodman, and a near relative of the present owner. Christ says: "The meek shall inherit the earth;" not inherit the world, the globe, but the *land*, the "soil," the portions of their fathers before them. "They shall not be rooted out of the soil."

And the bondmen were all set free. Many a time it would happen that a man would get so much "behind" that he saw no possible way of getting out of debt and still preserve his liberty. Think of the poor widow who

came to Elisha : "Thy servant, my husband, is dead. And thou knowest thy servant did fear the Lord. And the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen." Thus it must often have been in old times. But how they would count the years, then the months, then the days, till the year of Jubilee came in !

The Roman law had far less mercy than the Hebrew law. The third of the twelve tables of the Roman law provided that if a man was sued for debt before a judge, he should have thirty days to make up the money. If he did not, or could not, the creditor could throw him into prison for sixty days. He must, however, give him one pound of flour daily to live on. And during this period of sixty days, proclamation must be made on two several market-days, stating the circumstances ; so that, if he had any friends they might come forward and release him. At the end of the sixty days, if no one appeared to pay his debt, he was handed over

to the creditor, who could either kill him or make him a slave. It was a terrible thing, in those days, to be in debt and have nothing to pay. Just the position, exactly, the sinner is in with respect to his sins in the matter of God's broken law.

Now, not all the bondmen would be equally miserable. Some would be well fed, and only moderate work exacted from them. We might speak to such a slave and say :—

“ You have good food and are well lodged and kindly treated. Why can't you be content ? ”

“ Oh,” he would say, “ I am a slave. I must live and die away from my family and my home.”

And so the poor slave of Satan can not be content, however “ well off ” he may seem to be. When God made the soul he put a spark of heavenly patriotism in it ; and it never “ can sing the Lord's song in a strange land.” And on behalf of every enslaved sinner we thank God for that. The sinner will do it for himself when he is converted.

And notice, too, that the year of Jubilee began on the day of atonement. First pardon, and then blessing ; first the atonement for sin, and then freedom from sin. " If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

It was all a beautifully acted parable, or object lesson, to teach God's ways of dealing with poor sinners, and so wisely arranged that it conferred a great incidental blessing in the meantime.

MY WILL, WHICH IS MYSELF.

MY will is myself. And when I complain that my will is opposed to God, it simply means, if I take its true meaning, that I make myself God's enemy. My will is not something distinct from myself, but the inner principle, the soul, the mind. The will is the *ego*: that which constitutes my personality. But my feelings or emotions are not myself. They belong to me—as my clothes belong to me—but they are not I. My will is myself; and I can and ought to control myself. But I can not always control my feelings and emotions. Especially are they rebellious when I would claim them all and fully for Christ and his service. What, then, shall I do? Shall I sit down and wait, as others do, “till I can feel more deeply”? or “till I get my feelings all right”? Let me answer by an illustration:—

A city had rebelled against a good and paternal king. He came to besiege it. It had a citadel (so thought) which commanded and dominated the city. Whoever possessed the citadel held the city. The commander of this city and fortress determined to surrender. He treated with the king. One morning the royal standard was seen floating over the citadel. The royal troops were in possession. The king was there and was just issuing a proclamation of amnesty or pardon. The citizens were furious: "They had been betrayed!" The rabble was determined to "carry on the war." The king does not reproach the commander for not having taken counsel of the citizens, or for not winning over the rabble to his views before surrendering the fortress. "I knew I could not bring the rabble over," said the late commander to the king, "and so I took no counsel with them. I *could* surrender the fortress, and that I did. Thou must put down the rabble!" A year later we visit the

city, and all is quiet. The unruly populace is loyal and peaceable. They found that when the citadel was given up, it was in vain to think of further resistance.

That citadel is my soul, my inner self, my will. I can not bring my feelings (the "rabble") into subjection; but Christ can. I can, however, surrender to him the citadel, the soul; and he will bring my feelings and emotions into complete subjection. Better than any possible control of mine,

For Christ to come
And make his home
In the poor dwelling of my soul!

Try it, dear friend, try it! Give Christ your *will*. And when you surrender your will, which is surrendering yourself,—without first waiting to get your feelings, your emotions, all right,—your emotions will, of necessity, soon follow. We have all often done what we did not feel inclined to do; and have done it just because it was right

and proper to do it ; and we soon found that we began to like it better as we continued it. The will must rule the emotions, not the emotions control the will. "Give me thine heart !" that is the command.

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THE CONSCIENCE.

THE conscience is God's consul in the soul. I see a foreign flag flying in one of our cities, and I learn that the foreign consul lives there. That house is, by the unwritten law of nations, a part of the foreign country. No legal process from our courts runs there. The consul came from his own country and is amenable only to his own country's laws. Man's soul was originally an emanation from God, and that department of its action that we call conscience seems to be the only part of it that still retains a memory of the lost communion of Eden.

In Brock's Life of Havelock we are told of a former British "resident" in Cashmere. The people were very unfriendly and suspicious and, as if to bring trouble to a crisis, the rajah died, and several of his wives determined to obtain heaven by being burned

alive upon their husband's funeral pile. The treaty with the British was such that the consent of the resident must first be obtained before the *suttee* could take place ; and the already exasperated populace was ready to break out into violence and murder, if that consent were even delayed. The resident had no troops and was sick in bed ; he had no helper but God. He calmly expostulated with the deputation that waited on him ; told them that even in their own most ancient religious books such practices were condemned ; that they would offend the British government, whom it was their interest to please ; and that the thing was wrong of itself. And then, like Luther at the Diet of Worms, he was ready to say : " God help me ! I can do no more ! " But the resident was not murdered, the populace did not break out, and the women were not burned. God was there.

Conscience is that resident in the domain of the soul. We have not two spiritual enti-

ties within us — the soul and the conscience. We have but one immaterial part, which we call variously the soul, the spirit, or the mind. And the conscience is but the soul in one department of its action. I see an elderly gentleman walking the street and attending to ordinary matters of business. To-day he is but a citizen. Yesterday, however, he was a judge. I saw him in court hearing and deciding causes. To-morrow he is announced to preside at a meeting of learned men, and will for the time be a philosopher. But it is the same man in all these different positions. So with my soul: it is the same, but variously engaged. When my soul becomes an historian and recalls the past, I call it memory; when it becomes a seer and peers into the western sky, where the evening clouds of this life are golden with a reflected radiance, — from whence, I can not see, — I call it hope; when my soul is stirred up to think of others rather than myself, — to see with others' eyes and feel with

others' hearts and live with others' lives, — I call it love. And when the soul becomes a judge and sits in review **upon** its own actions, and bound, as every good judge is, **by** the law, and not by consanguinity to the offender, we call it conscience.

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ACTED PARABLES.

“**W**ITHOUT a parable spake he not to them,” we are told of Christ. And again: “When he was alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.” But Jesus sometimes taught by acted parables, as well as spoken parables. Probably we are to take that as an acted parable (Mark 8), where Jesus led the blind man out of the town and restored his sight gradually. And the cursing of the barren fig-tree was an acted parable to teach faith.

X X And I have no doubt that Christ repeated his parables over and over again, as occasion required. I know that Moody repeated anecdotes in America, and afterwards the same in Edinburgh; then in London, and then in America again. And by that time people were reading them in a book, somebody having gathered them from his oral utterances.

And some one might say : " Ah, I heard him give that anecdote ; but there was more of it — a sequel, which is not given here. I like it better as I heard it." And yet the stenographer was perfectly correct who reported it. He reported it as he heard it ; and the other man remembered it as *he* heard it. This will explain most of the alleged discrepancies in the Gospels.

The parable of the marriage supper has in Matthew a sequel which is wanting in Luke. Why is it necessary for us to decide that Jesus used this parable only once, or always gave it exactly the same ? In Matthew's sequel, which may be called " The Sifting of the Guests," there is a deep lesson for us as to the way we come to God. We can not come on any ground personal to ourselves ; it must be wholly on the ground of Christ's worthiness : we must have on the " wedding garment." The first part of the parable shows how men wickedly put off obeying and coming to God ; and also, how the poorest, the

most despised, and the most unlikely are bidden and exhorted to come. Sometimes there would be more need for the one part of the parable, and sometimes for the other ; for I have no doubt it was often repeated.

Having repeated in a meeting an anecdote of a man who went to Perth to do some work for the Lord, in the hearing of a minister now deceased, this brother called out to me in another meeting : " Tell us about the man who went to Perth ; " and I gave it again. So it comes to pass with every public teacher.

And we may learn this too : that Jesus would not only have us understand his parables, spoken and acted, but he gives them to us as examples of what can be done by illustrative teaching ; and we have the liberty, and by experience find the advantage, of making parables and bringing forward illustrations on every hand.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES.

“**W**HAT does that mean, papa?” said little Edwin. “I can’t see any thing between the lines but white paper.”

“It means,” said his father, “that you must understand what the words are written for. Now, intelligent children will often know the meaning of the words well enough, and yet not know why the author wrote the words. Knowing that may be said to be reading ‘between the lines.’ Or, sometimes there is a deeper, further meaning than appears on the surface: there is something you have to gather which is not spoken, and that is reading ‘between the lines.’”

“Our lesson next Sunday is the parable of the sower. Now, is there any thing ‘between the lines there’?”

“Why, our Lord tells you himself what it all means.”

“Oh, yes, I know ; but that was maybe for the Jews, or the people in old times. But if Jesus were speaking it now, or explaining it right in our Bible class, I wonder what he would say !”

“Well, suppose I try to read between the lines of that parable. Suppose the blessed Master were sitting here and telling us what the parable meant ; perhaps he would say something like this :—

“THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.”

“A preacher went out to preach, and as he preached, some of his good words reached a number of boys ; but they were thinking about their fun and paid no attention ; and when they got home, they could n’t remember where the text nor the reading was, nor what the preacher had been saying. And so the preaching did them no good.

“And some of his words reached some other boys, and they thought they would try and be good and religious, and would

pray and love Jesus just as the preacher advised. But when, after two or three days, the other boys found out they would not bluster and fight, and use bad words and do mischief at night, they began to mock them, and call them names, and work spiteful tricks on them. And the boys who thought they would try to be good got angry, and seemed ashamed to be caught 'being good,' and in less than two weeks were just as bad as any of the other boys. They left off trying to follow Jesus just because somebody laughed at them.

"And some of the preacher's words fell among the men and women who were very full of business and cares. And the men said: 'We must attend to our souls,' and the women said: 'It is of more importance to be saved than to be fashionable.' And the preacher thought there was going to be a great revival and many converts; for they began to come to the prayer-meetings, and some of them took pews in the church, and

a few became members of the church. But the men said: 'A man can't do business on Christian principles;' and the women said: 'It was impossible to be in society, and take care of one's house and family, and be religious too.' And their religion all seemed to fade out, though they did not all give up their pews. And when the preacher died, he said he hoped he should meet some of them in heaven; but he was not quite sure.'

"And some of the preacher's words fell on the ears of some boys and girls and men and women who were sick of sin, and tired of being enemies of God. And they took his advice and went that very day to Christ in prayer, and said to him: 'O Lord Jesus! We don't want to love sin any more. We want to be thine. From this hour we will be thy willing servants forever. We give ourselves away to thee. Save us!' And people soon found out that they were Christians. At first some tried to laugh at them; but they remembered that people laughed and mocked

at Christ and he did not get angry at it. And some of them went away as missionaries ; and still more of them did good missionary work at home and in their families. And all of them gained wisdom, though few of them gained fame. And when their neighbors who had mocked at them got sick, they sent for these Christian friends to come and pray with them. And when they died, the world around them said they were good men and women — the salt of the earth. And some did more than others ; but all did something for Christ."

ENLISTING WITH CHRIST.

ONCE, in talking with an old soldier, I asked him the circumstances of his enlistment. I said:—

"At what moment, when the recruiting officer got hold of you, could you properly say to yourself: 'Now I am a soldier'?"

"Oh," he said, "I suppose when I took the shilling and was sworn in."

"That is it," I said. "You were then enlisted; you were under the articles of war; and if you had deserted, you would have been brought back. But tell me, Did you know any thing, as yet, of a soldier's duties?"

"Why, no," he replied. "I knew nothing of the drill, or any thing else. I was just a raw recruit; but now it was my duty to begin to learn, and I did begin the next morning."

"Just so," I went on to tell him, "is it with the Christian soldier. The moment he

surrenders his soul to Christ and believes and trusts him, he is a Christian. He has enlisted. It is true he does not know how to pray connectedly, or to read the Scriptures with understanding, or to help others, or to combat the enemy, or a hundred other things a Christian ought to do ; he does not know the drill yet. Still, he is a soldier, and he is going to learn the whole duty of a Christian soldier, and to begin at once. But, meanwhile, he is one of the army. He has been sworn in ; his name is down on the books ; and the Great Commander recognizes him as his."

CROSSING THE RED SEA.

I HAVE much sympathy with those who are sometimes sneered at as "finding something spiritual in every pin of the tabernacle ;" for I believe with Paul that these were all "ensamples" of heavenly things. Take the passage of the Red Sea and the desert journey. The crossing of the Red Sea completely cut off the Israelites from their former life and from the land of their bondage. Through all their generations it was looked back upon as the crisis and beginning of their affairs as a nation. They were before that but a host of fugitives ; now they were a migratory nation. And they were not out of Egypt till they did cross the Red Sea. Their faces were desert-wise, but they were not yet free in the desert. They still trod the soil of the land of their

captivity. Once the crossing, and all that was changed.

How like the Christian experience ! The poor sinner may have been turning his back upon his sins, and endeavoring to escape from them ; but he is not safe, nor in circumstances to sing his song of deliverance, till he stands on the farther shore of the sea and sees Christ's blood between him and his former life. That is his Red Sea.

Nor was it before the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, but after it, that they were led to Sinai to learn God's law. And he who would learn the will of his Father in heaven must first cross the Red Sea ; must first put Christ's blood between him and his former life : then he will be prepared to learn and love God's law. When Mr. Legality would have Christian go to Mount Sinai first, before ever he had entered the gate of repentance, the poor seeker after peace was well-nigh overwhelmed with the lightnings and the earthquakes. God has but one glori-

ous path to Canaan : the Red Sea first, then the law at Sinai, the desert journey, the Jordan, the Land of Promise! Are you sure you have crossed the Red Sea? If you have not, how are you going to get to Canaan?

CHRIST ALIVE.

THE first Sunday I ever spent in England was at Walthamstow, a few miles north of London. The good minister in whose house I was to pass the Sabbath was called out of the room on the Saturday evening, to see some one, and left me to amuse myself with books and magazines for half an hour. When he returned he excused himself for leaving me so long, saying I would forgive him when he told me all about it. It seemed a gentleman in the neighborhood had been in Italy a few years before, and brought back with him an Italian body-servant. This man had duties to attend to on Sunday mornings, but was always present at public worship in the afternoons. "You will have him in your congregation to-morrow afternoon," said my friend ; for I was to take his place in the afternoon, while he should go

out to preach under one of the few trees now remaining in Epping Forest to the throngs of Sabbath-idlers who came down from London.

The Italian had been thoughtful, and had finally begun to indulge a hope in Christ Jesus. He had come to the minister on that Saturday night, and in his broken English told him his tale.

"In my countree," said he, "in my Italie, the priests always show us Jesus *dying*; Jesus on the cross; Jesus in the grave. You show me Jesus *alive*; Jesus love me; Jesus think of me; Jesus in heaven. And I love Jesus, and I thought I would come and tell you I love that Jesus who is alive."

It is even so. While our sins are atoned for by his sufferings and death, let us remember that Christ's death is always connected with his resurrection; the pledge of our rising from the grave; the evidence of the Father's acceptance of his substitution. He lives that he may love us, and we need, as the Italian did, a living Christ, to love us and think of us and reign over us.

ONE THING OR THE OTHER.

WE can not be two contradictory things at once. We can not be the intimates and bosom friends of bad men and be good men ourselves. We can not be separate from Christ and yet be acknowledged by him as his. We can not pass by the Lord Jesus Christ, as he hangs on the cross, and join the mocking crowd that wagged their heads and reviled him, without shutting ourselves out, at the same time, from meeting him in paradise. We can not despise God's mercy without at the same time daring and provoking God's wrath.

But, on the other hand, we can not seek God's mercy without at the same time putting away all trust in ourselves. We can not hold on to Christ without letting go every false hope. We can not sincerely seek

pardon without hating sin. We shall not seek God without finding him. We shall not find God without at the same time finding peace, happiness, and heaven.

THINKING IN RIGHT ORDER.

IN the Old Testament prophecies, the threatenings are sure to end with a sweet promise. And the Holy Spirit, who thus taught the prophets, teaches us in the same way still. It is easy for us to say : "I am a great sinner ; I shall surely perish !" Just as David mistakenly said : "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." And when we read in the Word of a great Saviour it is still easy for us to say : "Yes, a great Saviour, but then I am a great sinner." The order of the facts in the Spirit's teaching is quite different. The Spirit reverses the order : "You are a great sinner, but you have a great Saviour."

Where there is an element of hope and an element of despair, it makes a great difference which comes last. Don't let us look for the fading of the light and the

coming of the darkness ; but rather believe that "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."

JUSTIFICATION AND HOLINESS.

I KNOW not where I could lay hold of a sharper or clearer illustration of the relation between justification and holiness than the enlisting and drilling of a soldier. We will imagine him a veteran of twenty or thirty years' service. We ask him: "Are you drilled?" He evidently feels that is a question not to be answered in a monosyllable. He takes off his foraging cap, strokes his gray moustache, and says: "Well, I thought so once. I wrote to my mother, a couple of months after I enlisted, that I had got all the drill; but I don't think so now. There are a hundred things in gunnery, tactics, fortifications, military engineering, and the like, that you would not understand if I should tell you, that I am only beginning to know something about. No; I am not drilled, but I am in process of being drilled."

"Well, are you enlisted?"

"Oh, yes. I am enlisted all I can be. That was a thing that was begun and ended on the very day I was sworn into the force."

So with Christ's soldier. His enlisting is complete. His justification is a finished grace. He "took the oath" when he accepted Christ; and Christ accepted him and justified him. But, "Is he holy? Is he sanctified?" He thought so, perhaps, for a few weeks after his conversion. "There was a time," said good old Bishop Latimer, "we thought we could drive the devil out of England by the ringing of holy bells and such like foolery. And Satan did seem to think it good sport, and did hide himself. But when the Word came to be plainly taught and plainly read, Satan did see it was no child's play, and came out, and did rage and fight." And as long as the young convert thinks he has got all, and there is nothing more to attain, Satan is content to hide himself and let him alone.

But holiness or sanctification is not a place, but a way. A way or road is to travel on, not to live on. Isaiah says (35 : 8) : "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness." That is the road, dear Christian pilgrim, you are to travel in—the "way of holiness." As far as "sanctified" means "separated," and it often has largely this meaning in the New Testament, a Christian may say, "Yes, I am sanctified." But as we generally use it, to mean holiness, sinlessness, perfection, we say, as the soldier said about his "drill" : "No; we are not sanctified, but we are in process of being sanctified."

BORN FROM ABOVE.

SUCH is the alternative translation of the "born again" of the third chapter of John. The change is so great and thorough that only a new birth can fitly image it. From being an heir of hell, to be made a child of God.

On this winter morning the snow is lying thick and soft around and over the landscape. It fell yesterday; it is very pure and very white. But it may become soiled. Day by day impurities will gather in and upon the snow. It is no longer beautiful to look upon. It becomes filthy. Can it ever be cleansed, made white and pure again? Not by washing it, nor by sweeping or dusting. It can only be made pure again by being melted, and exhaled, and rising as invisible mist into the upper air, and gathered into clouds, and

softly sent down again pure once more —
“born from above!”

So is the soul, beneath the power of God,
drawn upward, purified, and born again, or
from above.

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THE FAR-REACHING NATURE OF GOD'S LAW.

WHEN I was a child I knew that hatred was a sin, and I wondered why there was not a commandment which said: "Thou shalt not hate." And I knew that telling lies was sin, and I thought there should have been a commandment against lying. I did not know how far-reaching and all-embracing are the commandments we have. There is not a sin but is aimed at and denounced in one or other of the ten. God looks over this awful world of sin. He divides sins, just as we divide languages, into certain classes or sets. He takes ten great classes, or nations, or languages, or tribes of sins, and denounces them all.

Now each of these tribes or nations of sins has a king, a chief. So the Almighty declares war against the king or chief. As in the

Crimean war the queen of Great Britain declared war against "the emperor of all the Russias," yet the war was really against the whole Russian nation, so God declares war against the king of each nation of sins by name ; but the conflict is with the whole tribe or nation of which he is head. Take hatred for an instance, and look at the fifth chapter of Matthew for an exposition of the sixth commandment. The very warning that the rabbis gave about murder Jesus transfers to him who hates his fellow-man. And John says : "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." The fact is, the nation is hatred, the king of that nation is murder, and the declaration of war is leveled against the king by name, but includes, as every declaration of war does, the whole nation.

And so with my other early difficulty about lying. The most flagrant kind of lying we could imagine is to swear away the life of an innocent man and testify against him of crimes he never committed. But the nation

is a very large one; all falsehood, prevarication, and concealment of truth are found there; but the king of that tribe is perjury, and the command makes special mention of him.

Another of my early cogitations was on the relation of the first and second commandments. I thought they had overlapped and interlaced each other and were indeed but one and the same command, but divided into two for convenience of remembering, or for some other reason. But it is not so. The sin denounced in the first commandment is atheism and unbelief, and a turning away from God. The sin forbidden in the second is the idolatry of ritualism and forms taking the place of real worship. And it would be difficult or impossible to explain to a child who every day sees images adored, in what way that very thing is not a breaking of the commandment against images. This was Aaron's sin in the desert. He "made a proclamation, and said, To-morrow

is a feast to the Lord." And he had the golden calf all ready for the occasion. It was an "improved" way of worshiping God. The sacred ox or calf was a symbol of power, and they imagined they could have a better idea of God's power by having this figure before them. A little friendless orphan boy, sick in a hospital in India in the time of the dreadful mutiny, said, when spoken to about Jesus Christ: "I think I could pray to him better if I had a little image of him to look at." The poor little fellow had been left largely to the care of heathen servants, and knew little of the true God. And that is the very feeling to which a corrupt form of Christianity panders.

But we as a people and as Protestants are by no means free of blame in this matter. We break the first commandment when we put God out of our lives, and his thought out of our hearts, and live only for money or position or influence, or fame or selfish indulgence. We have then "some other god

before him." And we break the second commandment when, not being so gross as to set up a calf in the desert, or burn incense to Nehushtan (2 Kings 18 : 4), all the worship we give to God is to put on our best clothes and go to church, or drop a coin into the collection. If that is all the honor and worship we give to God, we might just as well put those clothes on a pole and make an idol of them, or bow the knee before the goddess portrayed on the coin.

Depend upon it, God does not twice fulminate a declaration of war against the same hostile king. Once is enough. The king of the nation of sins in the first commandment is atheism — denial of God. The king in the second commandment is idolatry ; the nation is ritualism, serving God in vain ways of our own, instead of serving him in spirit and in truth. Now the worst degree of putting God out of our lives is to deny his existence altogether. We may not go so far as that ; we may be merely careless of spiritual things,

yet we break God's first commandment. We may not go so far as to set up idols and images in our homes and in our churches ; yet if all our worship is mere outward formality, the religion of a Pharisee, we break the second commandment.

And if our better appreciation of the far-reaching nature of God's law drives us closer and quicker to Jesus Christ, the great Law-keeper and our great Advocate, then bless God for his Ten Commandments, and for the fact that they are so comprehensive that every sin it is possible for man to commit is included in one or other of the ten nations or languages into which God divides them.

THE THREE-FOLD ASPECT OF GOD'S COVENANT.

WHEN Christ sets us free from condemnation and gives us the rules of his household for our guidance, we shall find they are the same Ten Commandments we used to look at and tremble. If we believe Christ, we are saved already; we do not require a law "that will save us;" we have a Saviour that saves us. But we want to know what is Christ's will, that we may do it; and he says in sweetest accents, "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" and he gives us the ten "words" that were spoken at Sinai, but he calls them now by a different name: it is "Christ's law" now, our rule of life.

The fact is, the Decalogue comes to us in a two-fold character, just as Christ comes to us. Believe Christ, and you shall live; he will be to you a savor of life unto life. Re-

ject Christ, and you shall die; he will be unto you a savor of death unto death. So with the commandments. Take them as the rule of your Christian life, and you will find that Christ's fulfilling of that law is put to your account, and you are blessed by them. Take them as a covenant of works, and you are at once condemned by them. "So the law was our pedagogue, to bring us unto Christ!" Just as the confidential slave, the "pedagogue" who superintended the education of the children, could not teach them many of the branches himself, but was responsible that the children were led or carried to the teacher or professor, where they could get the proper lessons, so the law can not save us of itself, but it takes us to Christ, who can save us.

GOOD SAYINGS OF BAD MEN.

THE wise man will not refuse wisdom, come from where it will. In the case of one good and holy, the words he utters come to us with a force and dignity utterly wanting in the case of a suspicious character; and yet the latter may give us a thought or a principle that will do us good all our lives. We have numerous examples of this in the Scriptures. Some of our choice sayings may be traced to unworthy men. We do not often repeat the false philosophy of Cain, when he insolently and wickedly asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" though I have heard it urged in all seriousness by opponents of the temperance movement. But we do, as poor sinners, often feel like crying out, with that unhappy man, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" A saying of Balaam's — crooked, disobedient, and unprinci-

pled as he was — lingers in our memories as a strain of sweet music: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Unhappy man! he lived among the wicked, and his death was like his life.

Perhaps no character in the Scriptures is more despicable than Ahab. Yet we adopt one of his sayings for its truth and for its beauty. The king of Syria had sent insolent and oppressive demands, and when Ahab demurred, the Syrian threatened him; and Ahab sent back this message: "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."

When we use the proverb, "All that a man hath will he give for his life," we are quoting Satan himself. Again, we have in the case of Nebuchadnezzar the utmost worldly sagacity with the most brutal tyranny and selfishness. Yet we repeat the question concerning the Most High, and weave it into our prayers: "None can stay his hand, or

say unto him, What doest thou?" Nor can we avoid feeling daily the importance of the question asked by the unprincipled procurator of Judæa, when the Lord Jesus stood before him: "What is truth?"

Thus we may learn, even from bad men, and may profitably employ some of their utterances; remembering always that a man's words are often better than the man himself; and that with a bad man there may be some part of the field of character not so utterly given over to weeds and briers as the rest.

DIVIDING OUR TIME.

MANY a young convert is troubled over this question : "How much time must I give to religion, and how much may I use for the world?" He would, with his present feelings, give all his waking hours to God; but he has duties and necessities that compel him to spend many hours every day in work or business, and he seems to himself thus robbing God.

Now the question he asks nobody can answer except by saying, "Give God all your time." And it seems to him, when his friends tell him that, that they are mocking him; and when the Scriptures tell him the same, that it is a riddle he can not solve.

Let us have a Socratic conversation upon this matter.

"Does God appoint us any work — actual bodily labor — to do?"

"Yes."

"Then is there any sin in doing what God appoints?"

"No."

"Then we have reached the conclusion that all labor is not sin. Is God always present with his children?"

"Yes."

"Then if you are a child of God, will God be always present with you?"

"Yes."

"In your hours of labor, as well as in your hours of worship?"

"It must be."

"And is he not always pleased when we do what he commands us?"

"Yes."

"Then, when we are enjoined always to have the Lord with us, and when God promises to be always with us, must it not follow that we do not need to divide our time between God and the world, but have God with us all the time? If we can make him, as it

were, the senior partner in our business, or the overseer of our labor, shall we not feel that we must do honest business and do reliable work? Then we need not and must not toil so as to unfit ourselves for converse with him who goes with us to our daily duties and is greatly interested in our worldly affairs."

Thus, if we set right^{ly} about it, we do not need to divide our time: we can give it all to God.

HELPERS IN PRAYER.

WHY was it, when Christians many a time might have escaped molestation and persecution, if they had only kept at home and dropped all their meetings for awhile, they would meet together for prayer, and thus got themselves into danger? Just because they needed and wished the help that came through each other's prayers. They could pray alone, but that was not enough; they must pray together, and thus help one another, and bear each other's burdens. The great helper is the Holy Spirit. But his help is not so often in direct suggestions to the mind as through some of his children. He has more interests than mine to consider, and his sending me help in the more indirect way, by a human brother, answers a double purpose: it leaves a blessing with the brother who gives a blessing to me.

Our former mercies are great helpers for us. There are many things we ought to forget, — sins and rebellions and hard thoughts of God, — but mercies we are commanded to remember. And we can use them as pleas for more mercies.

And our own human experiences are helpers. Do we not feel far more disposed to grant a petition, are we not drawn out in a far greater tenderness, when there is a longing, loving, certain expectation of receiving; when there is a tender confiding in us, in our love and liberality; an expectation that will not take a refusal, and which we can not refuse? And is it not as true of God? “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children” (and we know what the yearning heart of a child is!) “how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

Your needs, your desires, your Christian friends, God’s own promises, your former

mercies, your human experiences, are all helpers for you. In all these ways you have also the help of the Spirit.

WORKING FROM WITHIN.

GOD'S plan of restoring human nature is to begin within and have the renovating influences work outward. Man's plan is to begin on the outside; but alas! the process stops there. To purify the stream we must have the fountain pure; and to have our nature made holy we must have the principle of holiness within, in the soul; for it is from the soul that actions proceed. Our Lord showed this in the parable addressed to the Pharisees about the cup and the platter. The pollution was inward, in the contents. No mere outward cleansing would reach that. I knew a foolish but well-meaning man who thought he could resuscitate a boy who had been twenty-four hours drowned by warming and rubbing the body. And he got the poor rigid limbs supple and a certain feeling of warmth in the surface of the body, but

there was no life, no breath, nor could there be.

And so an outward reform merely will never make a new man. The heart must be given up to God. Christ's Spirit must dwell within. The springs of human action must be purified before the nature can be pure. Have we not seen middle-aged men, polite, polished in manner, soft in speech, and careful not to offend, and yet we knew them to be bankrupt as to every moral principle. So it may be spiritually. There may be the outward semblance of a changed nature, and yet the nature remain unchanged. And do not forget that if you shrink from having the Holy Ghost rule over you and want still to keep the control of your own moral being, you can not become a child of God. Self is on one side and God is on the other. If we have God we have all things; if we have self we have only self.

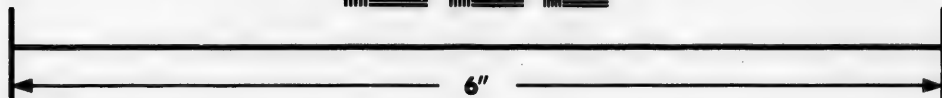
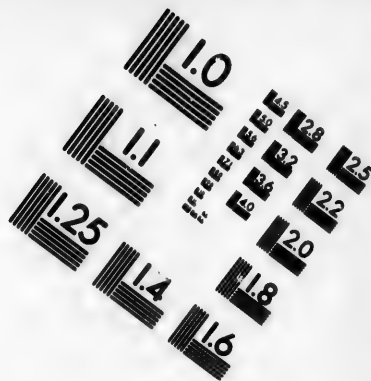
SOWING AND REAPING.

HOW slow the world is to believe that mental and spiritual sowing just as surely brings forth a crop as any other sowing. No one professes to doubt that wheat will produce more wheat, or beans a crop of beans. Yet men take in and believe and spread around them bad principles and degrading habits, and do not seem to think that these will grow.

Not one of us has the right to do any thing without expecting the appropriate reward or result to follow. A bad boy naturally makes a bad man, and an evil habit or bent of mind will degrade the whole soul. A man thinks and resolves that he will never get into the penitentiary ; yet he goes on robbing and stealing, and he is sent there for fifteen years, and dies in prison. He failed to see that crime always leads to its punishment.

But there is a deliverance. Not that Satan becomes willing to let you go, not that sin has ceased to be most abominable in the sight of God; but this — that Christ has come “to destroy the works of the devil.” And where does he find them? In your heart, poor sinner! This insensibility to the evil of sin; this putting off all serious thought; this want of all desire to be rid of sin; this despising of God’s mercy, — Christ comes to make destruction of these. You may keep him out; you have done so already; but if you admit him — and you have, in words at least, often prayed him to come — he destroys all these. If a man is not willing to have the evil rooted out of his nature, he can not be saved.





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JESUS ON THE CROSS.

THE heart-broken words, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" adopted by Jesus from the Twenty-second Psalm, I have often thought especially reveals to us something of the penalty of sin, which he bore for us—in our stead. Most Scotch boys, of whom I was one, learn from the Shorter Catechism this: "All men, by their fall, lost communion with God." By sin we have "lost communion with God." We are now, in our fallen and natural state, like the branches of the apple-trees I see cast over the road-fence by a farmer out of his orchard, when he pruned it in the spring. I have seen them with buds and small leaves, sometimes with opening blossoms; but they are cut off from the tree, and must die.

Now was not this exactly the penalty pronounced upon Adam? He did not die in

the literal sense on the day he ate the fruit ; he lived for nine hundred years. Nor are we to think he died the eternal death ; for we believe he died in faith. But the penalty came on the day he sinned, for God would keep his word. Then how ? Why, in this cutting off from God. And he could only live again by being newly grafted in. Our Lord's parable about the vine and the branches, or Paul's about the olive-tree, will explain it.

It was this very penalty — this cutting-off from God, as a branch from a tree — that was pronounced in Ezekiel : "The soul that sinneth, it shall die !" For the penalty of sin, the wages of sin, is in all ages the same. And I apprehend that it was this very penalty that our Lord bore upon the tree. He, in taking our place, paid our penalty, whatever that might be. And here we find him, in this horror of darkness, cut off from God.

Yea, once Immanuel's orphaned cry
The universe hath shaken ;
It went up single, echoless :
" My God ! I am forsaken ! "

And the following circumstance brought very vividly to my mind the peculiar form and language of our Lord's cry on the cross. A ministerial brother once told me of his eldest son, who had died somewhere in the United States. His employer had written the father a letter, detailing the circumstances of his son's sickness and death, and among other things said: "During the last twenty-four hours of his life he wandered much in his mind, and spoke to himself all the time in some language we could not understand." "Oh," I said to my old friend, knowing he was from the Highlands, "that would be Gaelic." "Yes, I suppose so," replied he, "but he never heard Gaelic in his father's house. My wife and I when we were married — we could speak both languages — agreed that we would keep house in English and use that language in our home; and our children never heard us speak any thing but English. No doubt he heard the Gaelic on the school play-ground and among his little play-

mates from his earlier infancy ; but it could hardly be 'called his native language." Yet here it was ; the poor fellow, dying among strangers, wandered back in the mists of death to the heather and the Highland hills ; and he was once more in imagination a little barefooted Highland boy, with tartan trews, and the honest Gaelic tongue. And is it too far-fetched to believe the same of Christ ? that he too wandered back to the vernacular he had learned and lisped in his highland home — for Nazareth was up among the hills, twelve hundred feet high — and now the language of his childhood was the language of his dying thoughts. No doubt he had taught much in Greek, — for Greek was the language of public life, just as the English is now among the Gaelic Highlands, — but the sanctities of life and death, and mother and infancy and home, all expressed themselves to his mind in the home-like Aramaic.

Let us comfort ourselves with the thought that whatever our penalty for sin was, Jesus

bore it for us ; and with the further thought that his enemies can no more reach him now. For he, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."

CHRIST AS A YOKE-FELLOW.

BOYS have their thoughts, and perhaps if they were to speak oftener about them they would get mistakes corrected much sooner. In thinking about the words of Jesus, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," I used to imagine the Master sitting and deciding for each one of us what kind and weight of a yoke we should bear ; and that yoke, whatever it was, should be on our necks till death. But we are sure to learn, if we are anxious to learn ; and I now look upon it in a much more cheerful light. Christ appeals to us to become yoke-fellows with him. He invites us to come and share his experiences. Paul had his yoke-fellows, and he sends kind remembrances to them. Our Master does not put a yoke upon us, and stand off at a distance to see us toil beneath it. He rather asks us to come under the

yoke with him, and well assured are we that in such a case the heavy part of the service is done by him who now invites us.

What a blessed mark was put upon the poor Cyrenian ! not the Simon who denied his Master ; not the Simon who condescended to invite Jesus to dine with him ; not the Simon who practiced sorcery in Samaria ; but the Simon who bore Christ's cross. And Luke, with his usual care and exactness, tells us that he bore it " after Jesus." Of course it may mean that Jesus walked before, guarded by the soldiers, and Simon came behind, bearing the cross ; but we are pleased to think that very likely it means that Jesus, unable to bear the whole weight any longer, continued to bear the forward, and presumably the heavier, end, and Simon bore the other end after him. Two things would immediately occur to Simon's mind, and have occurred to many a Christian's mind since : 1. He would necessarily be obliged to keep step with Jesus ; and 2.

He could bear more of the load by getting up closer to Christ. No doubt he did them both, and we thank him for it!

Blessed companionship! divine yoke-fellow! How easy is thy yoke when thou dost bear it with us! And even the cross itself has sung itself out of the disgrace men sought to put upon it, and has become a badge of discipleship!

“Light is the load when his grace goes with it,
Leader and Lover and Friend!
Sweet is the rest with his love beneath it,
Solace that never shall end!

Come to the Refuge, and you shall have rest;
Come to the Blessed, and you shall be blest;
Now and forever a friend and a guest;
Come to the Saviour, come!”

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THINGS go in cycles, and the fashion and form of spiritual thought is no exception. Some years ago there was a disposition to neglect too much the Old Testament. "It gives us God's dealings with his ancient people, and it prophesies concerning Christ." This, and nothing more. But of later years many people begin to see that there is much more than this. If Christ was king and leader of his Church in ancient times as well as in what we call the Christian ages, — and his own Spirit indited the word then even as he applies it now, — then why would it not be perfectly easy for him so to construct the word, and so to order the ceremonies and guide the history, that every thing should image spiritual experience and teach us concerning himself?

I have heard Thomas Binney preach, one

of the great men of modern English Nonconformity; and one of Binney's root-principles he was always teaching young men was that "all Old Testament facts were doctrines." There is a depth in that thought it would well repay us to elaborate and work out. A friend of mine gave the other evening a most instructive and elaborate parable rendering of the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca. The whole story is full of the most apt and beautiful images of Christ and the believer, the bridegroom and the bride. And so it may be in every part of the old and inspired record.

Mr. Moody, in speaking of Rahab and Jericho, said there was a "scarlet line" running all through the Old Testament, testifying of Jesus and his blood. And if we could imagine Christ taken out of the Old Testament, what would be left? Something of history, something of philosophy, a little poetry, a little theology, but nothing to give a man a hope beyond the grave. It would be a temple without a shrine.

"Take out my heart when I am dead and gone," said an English statesman, dying, "and you will find the name of England there." So, penetrate to the heart of the Old Testament and you will find it bright with the name of Jesus. He dies in its sacrifices; he testifies through its prophets; he intercedes in its high priests; he receives us in its cities of refuge; he bears our sins in its scape-goat; he feeds us in its paschal lamb; he leads us in its pillar of cloud and of fire. Jesus is in the sprinkled blood; in the sin offering; in the incense; in the Holy of holies; in the holy breastplate of the priest; in the mercy-seat; in the ark of the covenant; in the temple. Thank God for the Old Testament!

PROVIDENCE

THERE is a misty idea in many men's minds, as if "Providence" were separate from the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost; a fourth Person, or a separate department in the Godhead. The Scriptures do not teach us so. Paul and Silas were going into Bithynia, "but the Spirit suffered them not." It is not said "they were hindered by God's Providence;" though probably that would be the way of expressing it in our day. It was the same Spirit that enlightened, renewed, and sanctified them, that managed their outward affairs for them, opened the way for them to go in one direction, and barred the way in another.

It has been observed that "the Bible contains or exhibits no department of God's dealings with men which has not either conversion or sanctification for its object." And

when the Holy Spirit reproves ("convicts") the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16: 8), it is not for the mere sake of the sorrow, but for that to which the sorrow leads, submission and conversion. We call it "the work of the Spirit," when it concerns the feelings in the heart; but if those feelings are brought about, as in most cases they are, through occurrences in our lives or surroundings, then we call it "Providence." In reality, it is the same.

Has it ever occurred to you, dear young reader, that since sin has come into the world, it is a good thing that sorrow came with it? Think of the sin without the sorrow that it brings. If the medicinal products of nature, poisonous when used in sufficiency for food, were all agreeable to the taste, how deaths from poisoning would multiply! So, if sin had no sting and left no sorrow, how many more souls would be destroyed by it! Now the Spirit is one; and all his manifestations are for the end of benefiting man.

And the inward uneasiness and sorrow, and the outward circumstances that bring the sorrow, are all parts of the administration of the unseen God, who cares for us and loves us and desires to save us.

And is it not an inspiring thought to the child of God, that the same Spirit who has been whispering to him of truth and duty, of Christ and heaven, also directs his outward life? Even as we learn to know that what men call nature is the art of God, so also we learn at last to know that what we have been in the habit of calling Providence, often not knowing exactly what we meant by it, is the Holy Spirit managing and governing our affairs and us.

THE SECRET MARRIAGE.

A WOMAN who has suffered herself to be inveigled into a secret marriage, and who still, falsely and wrongly, calls herself by her own former name, and will not bear the name of her husband, puts herself altogether in a false and indefensible position. Just so with the believer who will not take the name of Christ ; for " I speak concerning Christ and the church." Such a believer has to hear his Lord evil spoken of, yet he is afraid to take his part. Others acknowledge him as their Lord and Master, yet he stands aloof and will not put himself with them as one of them.

And just as the woman who has placed herself in that most false of all positions — that of denying and keeping secret a marriage — must listen, if her false position is to be maintained, to other offers of marriage, so

the soul that fails to avow openly its union with Christ is always liable to the solicitations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. "You don't belong to the church. You don't need to be so particular about the Sabbath," says one. "You may drink with a friend," says another; "you're not a professor." "You are not bound to educate your children religiously; you are free; you can let them have a little liberty." "You may turn your back on the church when it becomes unpopular in an ungodly neighborhood." So the influence goes.

And such a believer is generally "bewrayed by his speech." He never says "we," in talking of the Church of Christ or of saints. It is always "they." No more certainly did the Ephraimites lisp at the word "shibboleth," than he stutters at the word *we*.

Now Christ knew the danger and the wrong of such a course. And he knew the remedy. He says most solemnly to you, to

me, to all : "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."



ONE RULE.

CHRISTIANS are sometimes at a stand to know how they are to regulate their lives; how they are to increase in grace, and what are to be the principles of success and the tests of progress. Paul had no doubt often met this difficulty in his apostolic work, and he tells the Colossians what the rule and the test is: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." The rule is simply this: to hold fast the doctrines that converted us. We are not to enter upon our Christian pilgrimage with one set of Christian hopes and principles, and then to walk all our lives by some other set of principles. We are not to get pardon and salvation by just believing what God says about his Son (1 John 5: 9-11), and then depend for assurance and joy upon something we see wrought in ourselves.

Poor child of earth ! You began to live by walking with Christ ; continue to walk with him. You were saved by grace alone ; you must walk every day by the very same grace. When you first believed, it was Christ only ; let it be Christ only now. You set out, in the day of your espousals, to do Christ's will ; continue to do his will and you will have your joy continued. I appeal to your memory of the days when you first believed in Christ. If you had the same zeal now, do you not think you would have the same enjoyment ? If there were in you the same giving up of your own way and taking Christ's way, would there not be the same results now as then ? If you had the same desire for Christ's glory, now that you have been in the church for some time, as you had when you were just coming in, would you not feel the same fervor ? The fact is, —and this is the line of Paul's argument with the Colossians, — we are to remember on what ground we are saved, and

to continue on it. It was all grace at the first, and it must be all grace throughout our life and to the end.

WHAT DID HE DO?

I WAS on one occasion preaching about the Prodigal Son. It was in a little log-house, where the beams of the "up-chamber" were rather too low to be comfortable for the tall men of the little company, and where the little table in front of me did not stand very firmly on the uneven floor, and the benches were not steady. Yet the people were very quiet and attentive. It had been a neglected neighborhood, and they seemed glad to hear the gospel from any body. In the middle of the sermon I stopped and said: "Now I want to ask you a question: When he had come to his father, and the father kissed him and forgave him, and commanded the best robe to be put on him, what did the prodigal do?" And looking at a good man sitting right before me, I said: "Mr. Wallis, what did he do?" He hitched round on his

seat and twisted up his mouth, as if he wanted to find an answer, but could not think of any thing. "Why," I asked, "he did n't do any thing, did he?" "No!" "That is it," I continued; "he just gave himself up to the servants, that they might do what they liked with him, according to the commands of his father. His doing was in the coming home; now it was the father's doing, and the doing of his servants, to receive him as a son and to robe him for the feast. So with the sinner. He must come to God and give himself up to God's will; and God's Spirit will clothe him with the garment of Christ's righteousness, and present him as a son. But he must give himself up to the Spirit, as the prodigal gave himself up to his father's servants. He will have the robe, the shoes, the ring, but he does not himself put them on. It is God that saves us, but we must give ourselves up to God to be saved."

NOT ALL SIN SEEN AT ONCE.

IN the trespass offering a man might bring a lamb from his flock, or two turtle-doves, or young pigeons, or the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour. Why this gradation? I think we may assume that no man was so poor as to be unable to bring the two young pigeons, on account of the cost or the value of them; and that the gradation in the offering pointed not only to the greater or less wealth of the offerer, but also to his greater or less apprehension of his guilt. David would not give to the Lord "that which cost him nothing;" and a pious Israelite, feeling deeply his trespass before God, would express it by more than the handful or two of fine flour.

The same gradation is found among ourselves. Some have more of the feeling of sin than others. But let every man who

feels sin at all come to God with the sins he does feel, and confess them. I am convinced that if we felt our sins at the moment of our coming to God with as great fullness of apprehension as we gradually and in the aggregate feel them through our Christian course, we should die at once. The duty of coming to God without waiting first for some "deeper" insight into sin is not only duty, but safety.

If I had so far forgotten God as to put forth my hand to my neighbor's goods, and had become full with the gains of robbery, and then, struck with remorse and wrought upon by God's Spirit, had desired to do what was right and make restitution, what should I do if much of the stolen property had been spent or wasted? Should I postpone restitution till, by the toil and labor and savings of years, I could return every one in full, with good interest, and by the splendor of my restitution seem to palliate something of the guilt of my sin? No; my duty would be to

go to each man I had wronged, tell him of my sin and my sorrow, bring back the part of his property I had in possession, and tell him I should never cease my efforts till I had paid him all. So let us not wait to feel sin deeper, but go with the sins we do feel. There may be sin in some man's splendid confession of sin.

GIVING GOD REASONS.

IF we have any good reasons why God should answer our prayers, let us spread out these reasons before the Lord. If there are no reasons why we should be blessed, let us not urge the unreasonable petition. God is continually giving us reasons, and he desires that we should use them. Thus did the holy men of old. Abraham pleaded for Sodom by urging that its destruction would be slaying the righteous with the wicked. And he thought that surely there must be some righteous men there. And if Abraham had lived there instead of Lot, I can not but think there would have been some converts. When God threatened to destroy Israel, Moses pleaded God's own reputation — that the heathen would say: "The Lord was not able to bring them into the land." Daniel prayed for Israel and for Jerusalem because

they were called by God's name. The Scripture is full of this principle. We always find reasons for asking favors from men. It is expected that we should have some good reason to give.

We want salvation. Why? Christ has died to obtain it for us. It glorifies Christ. It is according to God's desire. He has promised to forgive us. We want to escape wrath. We want to be holy. We want to reach heaven. We want to be rid of the dominion of sin. We want to be like Christ. We want to lead others. All good reasons. Spread them out before God. Depend upon it, religion is the most reasonable thing in the world. It is founded on good reasons.

THE END OF SIN.

IT is said of the ichneumon-fly that it pierces the body of a caterpillar in its more fleshy parts, and deposits there an egg, which soon becomes a grub. The caterpillar lives and feeds, and when autumn comes rolls himself up in his cocoon in preparation for the coming summer, when he is to be a butterfly. But to the caterpillar thus stung no summer comes. Other caterpillars push their way out of their cocoons and spread their painted wings in the air, but not he. He has nourished a grub; that lives, but he is dead.

So with sin. We can not tell by the looks of a man whether he is sold to sin. The homely caterpillar had his future butterfly-wings all nicely folded within him; but he was stung with the fly, and they are all eaten away. The angel wings God gives us in

germ we should keep as our lives ; but if the principle of sin is nourished within us, we may look like God's children, we may walk about and transact business, and live and die, and none suspect that our soul is destroyed ; but when we would rise to heaven, we shall find that our angel wings are gone, and for us no glad future life remains. Dear young friend, do you carry within you the principle of sin ? Do you know its end ? Are you sure your wings are safe ?

CONVICTION THROUGH EVIDENCE.

IF I had offended one of my fellow creatures, and were in great trouble about getting forgiveness, where would feeling come in. My feelings would make no difference as to the fact of forgiveness existing or not existing. What I should want, with respect to that wished-for fact, would be evidence. So between me and God, I do not need to feel forgiveness, but to know that God feels forgivingly toward me. I once heard Henry Varley use this illustration: "If I were a poor orphan, homeless child, and I got my eyes upon a man whom I knew to be rich and kind, and wished very much that he would take me for his own child, my feelings, however deep they might be, would not secure the blessing nor bring me happiness. But if I found out what his feelings were, and came to know that he had observed me,

and inquired about me, and loved me, and wished to adopt me and take me home, I should be perfectly happy ! ”

It is of much more importance to know God's feelings than to dwell upon our own. Another of Mr. Varley's anecdotes was this. He met an old Yorkshire friend he had not seen for thirty years.

“ Well, my old friend,” he said, as he shook him by both hands, “ how do you do ? And do you love Jesus ? ”

“ Ah, I can tell you something better than that ! better than that, Mr. Varley ! ”

“ What is that ? ”

“ Jesus loves me ! ” said the old man, solemnly ; “ Jesus loves me ! ”

Now the evidence of all this is in the Bible. It is there we have to look to find out what are God's feelings toward ourselves, and what God in Christ has done for us. It is giving evidence on the one side, and believing the evidence on the other. “ And this is the record ” (the evidence), “ that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

ONLY ONE AMONG THE REST.

IT is hard for us to bring ourselves down to the level of our race and be content to be saved along with the rest, without any thing special or peculiar in our individual case. Naaman wanted—so it proved—something more than a cure; he wanted a little glory as well. He could have a cure by going down into the deep valley of the Jordan and dipping in its waters; but he was angry that the prophet did not come and, with great deference and respect to him, pray Jehovah to cure him, laying his hand on the leprosy. That would have been pleasing; the other was not. But when he became humble enough to receive the blessing in any way, in God's way, the trouble was all over. I knew a man who thought he could to a certainty get a new heart if he went alone to a distant barn of his and prayed long enough. There was nothing

wrong in going to the barn nor in praying for a new heart. The mistake was in not believing God was willing to save him in any other way or any other place. And God did not heal him in the barn, no more than he did Naaman at the prophet's door. But they were both blessed as soon as they were humble enough to take the blessing in any way God should send it.

There have been men who seemed to think it was better to be noted for wickedness than not to be noted at all. A conceited young man in ancient times began to despair of fame for doing any thing good or noble, and so he thought that to do something very wicked would bring him some kind of fame, and no trouble to obtain it. He therefore fired the Temple of Diana at Ephesus. The people and the young man himself thought it was horrible and unsurpassable wickedness.

And there are people now who think God can not save them, they are so wicked. They

set up for an eminence in wickedness. They are a little ashamed of trying to be very wicked outwardly, for so many people are looking on. But they are wicked in their hearts, and they are sure they have got to such an eminence in wickedness that God will have to make some special arrangements for saving them. The Light that hath appeared to all men is not enough to illumine their darkness. The Saviour who saves others will fail in their case. God must stand amazed at the failure of his plan of salvation to reach them.

But who art thou, O sinner, whosoever thou art, that God should refuse or be unable to pardon thee? Thou art but one among the rest. Listen! God has done a greater thing for thee already when he laid thy sins on Jesus! Thou wert not asking him then; it was all of his own love. He knew thou wouldest need Jesus, and laid a foundation for thy salvation long ago. And since God has laid thine iniquities on Jesus (Is. 53 : 6)

before thou didst ask him, dost thou think he will turn away from thy petition and thy prayer now? Nay, trust him as others have trusted him, and be blest as they are blest. Thou art but one among the rest, and thou shalt have no other blessing than they. But then thou art one among the rest, and the common blessing has in it a share for thee.

THE SINNER A COVENANT- BREAKER.

WHERE the word Testament occurs in our English Bibles, it might equally well be rendered covenant, and is so rendered in nearly every place in the Revision. So our names for the two parts of the Scriptures might fitly be "The Old Covenant," "The New Covenant."

In Exodus (34: 28) we read: "The covenant, the ten commandments." The word "commandments" is in the margin "words." The "ten words;" that is, the ten articles of the covenant. In this aspect the sinner is not only a commandment-breaker, but a covenant-breaker. The Decalogue itself takes a new aspect when we consider it as a covenant. God not only commands, but he engages. Let us glance over the commandments,

and see what is inferred in each ; as is further elaborated in many other parts of Scripture :

I. I am your God.

II. I will come near to you.

III. When thou callest upon me I will deliver thee.

IV. "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

V. "The first [or chief] commandment with promise."

VI. He will protect thy life.

VII. "I will protect the sanctity of thy home, even as I forbid thee to desolate the sanctity of another's home."

VIII. Thou shalt not need to steal.

IX. Truth shall be kept for thee.

X. "I have commanded others that they shall not covet what is thine."

We have received all the blessings ; and if there is any thing we have not received, it is because we have neglected to take it and use it. And shall we not fulfill our side of the covenant ? We look upon a covenant-breaker

with horror and disgust, as among the lowest and most despicable of men. That is precisely our condition as unrepenting sinners. We have broken the covenant with God.

VALUE OF FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

THE statement of Zacchæus the publican, "the half of my goods I give to the poor," etc., was not a self-righteous boast concerning his former practice, but the vow of a new convert, who perhaps thought that a certain business talent for increasing wealth was the only talent he possessed, and he would dedicate that henceforth to God. And this resolution would be greatly strengthened by its being spoken.

Few men involved in the meshes of drunkenness, and who have, "on principle," refused the temperance pledge, have ever been cured of inebriety. And very few indeed who have resolved to come to God, but to keep it a secret and make no profession of religion, have ever found Christ. John Brown of Harper's Ferry used to say that in matters of conscience and duty he always followed

his first impressions ; that they were purest and best ; the "sober second thought" was apt to be a selfish or indolent thought. A lady in Glasgow sent me word, at the close of a meeting, that if I would go home with her she would give me a pound for the mission for which I had been pleading, as she had no money with her. And on the way she told me that when it came into her mind to do any thing for God, she could not trust herself if she put off the doing of it ; she wanted to commit herself at once, for fear she would change her mind. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY.

I USED to be troubled to know how I should ever understand some of Ezekiel, for instance. Was it to be taken literally? Who was the prince? And what about the city? And the waters flowing eastward? And if it could not be satisfactorily understood, why was it given? But I have learned to be more modest in my demands, and to be content that future generations should have something new to discover, instead of getting all their wisdom at second-hand from us.

Our Lord furnishes us the key of all prophecy when he says : " I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." It is given us to strengthen faith when we see God's fulfillment of it. If it were given merely to inform us before the time, it would be given us with perfect plain-

ness. And then, it is much to be feared, we should, when we saw the time approaching, sit down and do nothing but wait for its coming. A tribe of Ojibway Indians with whom I am acquainted know within a few days when the agent from the seat of government is coming to bring them their half-yearly allowances, and they can do no work for a fortnight — just lie on the river-bank and watch for his canoe coming.

Take for an example of prophecy, this: "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," and fancy any doctor of the law, how evangelical soever, trying before the occurrence itself to explain the allusion. How impossible to make any thing of it! But the two thieves and Joseph of Arimathea make it all clear. And how consoling and strengthening to the first believers must it have been! How calculated to take away the horror they must have felt at Christ's dying in such unworthy company, and how strengthening to their faith

to see that it was all predicted, even to the fact of his being buried in a rich man's tomb ; a circumstance unimportant in itself, but important as being a unique and conspicuous mark of God's foreknowledge and divine control.

When we approach prophecy, let us come, therefore, with the key our Lord has given us. When we use God's key we shall unlock God's treasures.

IT IS FINISHED.

THE finishing of any great work is always a most interesting and important thing. We should like to have been present at Saint Paul's, when all the scaffoldings were down and the grand space swept out, and hear the architect say: "The work is finished;" or if it is a life-long work of history, how interesting a moment when the historian lays down the pen at the closing sentences and says: "It is done." It was a memorable moment when the Venerable Bede, propped up in bed, dictated with fast shortening breath the last words of his Anglo-Saxon translation of the Gospel of John. "There remains but a sentence," said the transcriber. "Haste thee!" said the dying man. And the work was done.

Or if it is a statue or a picture, how the artist lingers over the last touches, till he

lays down the chisel or the brush and says : "I can do no more." Or, a long and holy life : how the calm of a heavenly eve steals over its close. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word : for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

But what can equal the closing, the finishing of the sacrificial work of our Lord Jesus Christ ? It was a work which had been preparing from the foundation of the world. A work so extensive that the salvation of the race depended on it. A work so important that only the Son of God could accomplish it. And it was finished on Calvary ! We can not add to it. It has never been laid aside for something else to take its place. It gives us a perfect plea before God : "Lord, my Saviour has finished the work of atonement for me ; save me for his sake alone !" Jesus knew the use we should make of his last cry on the cross ; and he wished us to make that use of it. The atonement is finished. No man can add to it. "Whosoever will" may come and be saved.

RELIGION FOR USE.

THAT is a poor religion that is best enjoyed alone. It may be compared to the taking of food. None of us could half so much enjoy a well-spread table if we were all by ourselves and alone. The pleasant company gives a relish to the food. And although to be alone with God is the way to get spiritual strength, yet the strength thus obtained is to be used in the battle of life. If it is right for me to leave the duties of life, to live in retired contemplation, then it is right for another ; and if all Christians should retire to monasteries and hermitages, what would become of religion in the world ? The fact is, the heart that is pure must show its purity among hearts that are not pure, that the contrast may influence them for their good.

Religion is for use rather than for show.

If a woodman would know whether an axe is good, he does not test it by looking at it only, but he goes down into the woods and tries it in the timber. Or a farmer, desiring to know the qualities of a new scythe, puts it into the grass. So if we would test our religion, we must take it down with us into the conflict and labor of life. If it wear well there, it will wear well every-where.

And this very religion we have tested below we take with us to the eternal mansions. We know that that man is richer for this life who seeks and keeps that purity of heart and oneness of soul with Christ that marks him as his disciple; and does it not follow that he is richer to enter into heaven? It is a great thing that a man on earth may learn to do the work of God, and thus make this life a preparatory school for heaven.

SOME ONE THING.

PAUL says: "This one thing I do." And there is always some one thing a person can do. The way we have chosen for ourselves may be hedged up, and we may not be able to do as we would; but some other opening will appear. And I do not know a better or a more Christian way than first to seek God's aid by prayer, and then sit down and ask: "Now is there no way I can turn in this juncture? Is there no person to whom I can apply? Is there no other way than the way I have thought of for accomplishing this, or for accomplishing something else that will do just as well?" Does poverty stare you in the face? There is some one honest thing you can do to make a living. Throw away pride and prejudice, and do it.

Are you a minister, a discouraged minister? There is some one person in your flock who

is full of faith and praying and working with you for a revival of the Lord's work. Are you a young man away from home and trying to push your way in the world? There is always some one thing you can do. Don't let foolish pride keep you from doing it. When all other resources seem to fail with the Christian, he knows that one thing never fails him: he can always go to God in prayer. That door is always open to him.

Ever since I got this thought—and it came to me like an inspiration, and long ago—I can see more and more its value: that a person is never so hedged up but there is some one thing he can do; some one way he can turn; some one person he can influence. He is never without any resource.

Now here comes in the wisdom of God. If we never got into difficulties we should have little or no necessity for the skill we are obliged to use to get out of them. If all our plans seemed to go right we should gather conceit and pride and self-righteousness. God

humbles us and teaches us by letting our plans fail, and then we turn to him for wisdom and strength. The philosopher who could not get a college to give him a salary nor a publisher to issue his works, instead of dying of a broken heart, asked himself: "What can I do?" and began teaching some little boys in a Sunday-school. His boys became divines and philosophers and teachers of others, and together did a hundred times as much good as he could have done, if every thing had gone straight with him. There is always some one thing we can do.

NOT ONLY OBJECTING, BUT PROPOSING.

ANY body can pull down. It needs neither skill nor heart to do that. Any body can object and deny. The Turk has been an intractable off-side yoke-fellow in the team of humanity all along. He destroys but never constructs. He denies but never affirms; he objects but never proposes. We would not wish to be, morally, only Turks. Such a one can never be in the van of human progress. He must wait till some one has done something, constructed something, attempted something, before there is any scope for his peculiar talent. Then he pulls down, not to construct better, but to leave a ruin — a wilderness. Such is not the part of one who loves God, or who loves man. To break down a man's cherished principles or opinions only irritates him, if that is all

you do. And he has a moral right to demand of you that you give him something better to take the place of what you have demolished.

There is always something of soreness in our minds when a faulty principle we held, or a prejudice we cherished, has been overthrown and removed. We don't take kindly to this process; and the less so if there seems to be in the other party a disposition to push the victory and humiliate us. And when "convinced against our will," — which is to us a very disagreeable process, — we are very stubborn about yielding. When, therefore, we are in the other position, that of convincing some one of an error or breaking down some wrong principle, let us remember all this, and lay our whole case before the other person without expecting an immediate consent. Expose the fallacy, propose the remedy, pull down the wrong, build up the right, but don't expect your friend will move right into your new building and pay you rent for

it from that moment. Let him have time to think it over; let it simmer in his mind; let your request for his credence and consent be rather a proposal than a demand; and next time you meet, your friend will say: "Well, when I come to think that matter over, I believe you were about right." And you have retained your friend and gained, it may be, an adherent to a very important truth.

I have tried to make it a life-long principle never to object to any thing without showing a better way. It has often checked me in objecting to things, and I have seen afterwards that I should have been wrong to object. Every thing has a reason for its existence; and we do very wrong in objecting to any thing before we have found the real or assumed reason for it. If the reason is visionary or false, then we are ready, provided we have something better to bring forward, to pull down and construct better.

And this principle of not pulling down only, but pulling down in order to build

better, is followed in the Scripture. Prophecies end in promise. Denunciations of sin are followed by advice and entreaty. And we ourselves shall gain greatly by remembering and practising the rule of "never objecting to any thing without proposing something better."

TRIBULATION.

IN the pictures of an ancient mode of threshing grain, one man is seen stirring up the sheaves and another is riding on a rude dray, with three or four rollers instead of wheels, drawn by a pair of oxen. This ancient threshing instrument was called by the Romans *tribulum*. The rollers had sharp stones, or rough bits of iron, imbedded in their surface, to make them cut up the straw and facilitate the separation of the grain. From hence we get our word tribulation. Just as the sheaves might be imagined to complain of the sharp rollers going over them and cutting into them, so a man in great affliction would speak of himself as a sheaf torn to pieces under the tribulum.

But as no thresher ever yoked his tribulum for the mere purpose of tearing up his sheaves, but, on the contrary, for the sole

purpose of bringing the precious grain into a shape to be useful to him as food, so our loving Father never puts us under the tribulum for the mere purpose of bringing upon us tribulation, but always for a divine purpose of good. "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried ; and ye shall have tribulation ten days : be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

IN THE TREASURY.

THE Lord sat in the treasury and saw what the worshipers gave; and his estimate was sometimes different from theirs. He sits in the treasury still, and "weighs the gold against the giver's thought," as of old.

The people came to the temple not only to offer sacrifices and pray and receive instruction, but also to give money for the service of God; and Jesus looked on. The rich men dropped in their gold coins or their handfuls of silver, with a flourish and a jingle. But a poor widow put in two mites; it was all she had, and she gave it all. And the Lord Jesus was better pleased with her offering than with all the gold of the rich men.

A very few years ago, in Montreal, a poor young man, far gone in consumption, lay in the hospital. He had no friends. Somebody put a few words in The Witness, asking

assistance for him. Two days passed, and only a dollar or two came in. But a poor Scotch woman, living alone and supporting herself by her own work, saw the notice and went to the hospital to see him. She had no money to give him; but what he needed was not so much money as care and love and tender nursing; and she took the young man home to her poor hired room and nursed him tenderly till he died.

The treasury is open still, and the widows and the poor still cast in "all that they have."

"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD."

THE whole Psalm is a spiritual song about sheep and their shepherd. David no doubt had in his mind his own early experiences. Perhaps he wrote it and first sung it when a shepherd. East of Bethlehem and beyond the corn-fields of his ancestor Boaz, the country grows rough and barren, with tremendous gullies a thousand feet deep, and sometimes only a few yards wide. Now here is David with his few sheep in the wilderness; and he has made up his mind that there is better grass on the other side of one of those profound ravines or gullies, and he will take his sheep across. There are sure to be wild beasts in such places. And I think I see him casting down great stones, and making all the noise he can to frighten lions and other wild beasts away, and then carefully guiding his flock down some dangerous zig-

zag path, carrying some weak lamb in his arms, and getting quickly across the miry bottom through the gloom of the place, and clambering up the other side, glad to have got safely through.

And then he thinks that is the way God takes care of him. In the terrible risk of being devoured by spiritual enemies; in the death-like shade and gloom of doubt and failing faith; in death itself, his Shepherd will protect him and bring him safely through to pastures green and fair on the other side. Thank God for such a hope and confidence!

DAILY BREAD.

SOMETIMES children think the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," asks only for wheat-bread; and one friend told me of his little boy who used to add: "And butter, please!" But as they grow older they begin to think it means more than wheat-bread, and more than mere food. The translation of the Church of Rome expresses it exactly: "Give us day by day our supersubstantial bread." Only we can hardly call it English. But "supersubstantial," something higher and beyond the mere loaf we hold between our hands, the material or substantial bread for our mouths, is really the thought here present. Our Lord elsewhere says: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." And so, praying the

Lord's Prayer, we ask for mercy, love, protection, goodness—all we need for this day.

And many people think they can see this further in it too: "Give us" implies more than one praying, and "this day" implies meeting together daily to pray; and where could the coming together to pray and the praying thus every day be so perfectly seen as in family prayer? But no one prays this prayer, if he is able to work, and then sits down in idleness, waiting for the loaf of bread or the joint of meat to come. God gives us bread, but he does not give it to us ready-baked out of the oven. He gives us strength to work, and soundness of mind to do business, and rain and sunshine to make the grain grow. And we take the money we earn and buy the bread the farmer and miller and baker have produced. But it is God who gives it to us all the same. So God gives us faith. I have heard men dispute whether God gives us faith. I say to them: God gives us faith just as he gives us bread. He

gives you all the materials for bread, life and health and strength and skill and money, or, failing these, kind friends, and you put them together and you have bread. So he gives you Jesus and his atonement ; he urges you by his Word and his Spirit to let your mind receive and believe what is true and reject what is false : he gives you all the materials for this "supersubstantial" bread. When you receive them they are faith, and you thank God, who is the great Giver of it all,

AMONG THE STANDING GRAIN.

IN the East it is common for a number of farmers to have their grain all growing in one large field together. Every man knows his own land and does not interfere with his neighbor. But the public must have roads, whether, as here, between the fences, or, as often with them, mere paths among the grain. With us, a path through a field would be plowed up every time and again trodden hard by passing feet. But in Palestine the plows are, to our eyes, very miserable, and they often let the plow out at the paths; indeed, they can scarcely keep their plows in at all. And so the paths follow, from year to year, the same lines.

Now along one of these paths we see Christ and his disciples walking. The wheat (for it is likely it was wheat) was nearly ripe

and the heads heavy. And if there were storms of wind upon the lake, there would also be, at times, storms of wind upon the land, and the wheat would straggle down over the path. And so the disciples, Mark tells us, "Began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn." But see the margin of the Revision: "began to make their way, plucking" the heads of the grain. The men were hungry; the stalks of grain hung over the path; they pulled the heads of some of them, instead of trampling them down, and rubbed the grain out in their hands, blowing the chaff away. Have n't you often done the same, little country boy?

The Pharisees were very particular about the Sabbath day. They would not reap grain, and they said pulling off a head of wheat was just the same as reaping. They would not thresh grain on the Sabbath, and they said that rubbing out heads in your hand was just another kind of threshing, and was a sin.

Johnnie said he wished it had been his

field. The poor hungry disciples should have had all the wheat they wanted to rub out, Sabbath day or any other day.

"Well," said his father, "don't forget, when you come to have a farm of your own, to turn in a few bushels every year for charity and for foreign missions and other things that the Lord loves. The Master is never hungry any more now; he does not eat it himself; but he receives it from us all the same, and remembers it at last. We don't read in Mark that the owner of the field said any thing, and we can have the same pleasure he had in seeing hungry disciples fed with his grain."

WHAT CAN WE KNOW ABOUT HEAVEN?

PERHAPS not very much ; and yet, by trying to interpret God's dealings with us and lessons to us, interpreting them with respect to heaven even as we interpret them with respect to earthly things, we may learn more than now we think. We may safely conclude—for we have it forced upon us by all our life-long experiences—that there is a spiritual lesson wrapped up in every providence, and a good moral to be drawn out of every experience—drawn out of it because God put it there, desirous that we should draw it out. Now, taking what we find in Scripture and applying the same Christian common-sense to it that we do to matters relating to the church and the home, what do we find about heaven?

Do they think about us in heaven? We

say Yes; and we arrive at it in this way: we are told there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. Now, if the angels rejoice over the salvation of a sinner, is it to be supposed that they keep the secret among themselves and do not communicate it to the saints? Have they so great an interest in a saint at the very beginning of his career, being happy in his happiness, and do they lose that interest and sympathy afterwards? If there was great rejoicing among the angels when Saul of Tarsus was converted, would they when he got to heaven lose so much of their interest in him as to keep from him what they were then rejoicing at—the salvation of some other sinner? And would there be any thing wrong in his asking the angels what they were rejoicing at? There would be nothing wrong in doing it among the saints on earth. Why should this experience of our spiritual fellowship—that of asking questions on spiritual things—be thrown away when we get to heaven?

Then we conclude that the angels will have no desire to keep from the saints in heaven the news they circulate among themselves, of this one and that one being converted. And if for one moment we could suppose they had such a desire, they could not refuse to answer the saints' questioning. And we shall have our memories in eternity. If not, how could we, as a matter of reward or punishment, receive consciously to ourselves, "according to the deeds done in the body"? In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus there was in all the parties a perfect remembrance of this life, and our Lord never gives us in his parables specific circumstances which teach false general principles. And if we remember this life, shall we not remember our friends? And shall we not often think of them and speak of them? It was one of our great pleasures here: will it cease to be a pleasure there? Yes; our friends in heaven think of us.

Shall we know each other there? It is not

certain that we shall in every case at first. We may need introductions to help our recognition. Benjamin Franklin came home, and when the forward fellow insisted on being allowed to stay all night, his mother let him sit in an arm-chair, instead of giving him the "spare bedroom," because she did not know it was her son. And how often must such cases of non-recognition occur in the emigrating from earth to heaven. But how do saints do on earth in such cases? Even if the features of that "spiritual body," whatever that expression may mean, do not give a recognized likeness in cases of long separation, perhaps the voice may. And if neither looks nor voice lead to identification, what is to hinder us from asking?

Do babes grow up in heaven? Yes; why not? All earthly analogy points in that direction. It seems unreasonable to suppose that a babe of a day old will the next day be a mature intelligence in heaven, and able to take its place in work and praise with the

apostles, martyrs, and angels, whose praises are so much mingled with past memories, and whose work is doubtless founded upon so much past experience. And it seems equally unreasonable to suppose an immature infant always remaining just as it enters heaven. We have no reason to believe that we shall remain stationary in intelligence and spiritual development, but every reason to the contrary. Why should it be otherwise with a babe? I can remember, at the age of four years, getting the most astonishing and rapturous piece of intelligence I ever got—that boys grew to be men. I never knew it before; I supposed that boys were always boys, and men always men. But now, oh, how my prospects widened out! Is it not equally a “childish thing” to be “put away,” that babes are always babes in heaven? Well, if they neither leap at once to mature intelligence nor remain always as they are, there must be a “growing up” in heaven. And oh, how much better a bringing up

have they than we could give them ! Angels and saints and Christ himself to take care of our babes ; and all safe in their Father's house, and trained in their first speech to talk of our coming.

It will do us good to think of these things. Our imagination is given us by God for good and wise uses. Why should we not let it out sometimes in long flights toward heaven ? The more we think about heaven, the more we know of it. And the more we know of it, the more we shall want to be there. And we may each say, as an old friend of mine said of himself : " I am bidden to the supper of the Lamb, and I intend to go."

MEMORIALS.

WHEREVER there is any thing glorious or great, or any man who has greatly won the admiration of his race, there is a desire that it or he should not be forgotten. "It is only a half-sized fir." There are hundreds of better ones in sight. "But this one was planted by Sir Walter Scott just the year before he died." Ah, that makes all the difference! It is only an old silver watch, the shape and size of a goose egg. "An old turnip!" says a youth at our side. But it was carried by the great Protector, and money could not buy it! It is only a faded blue pennon; the poorest fishing-smack you see has a smarter one. But this was carried by the Covenanters at Bothwell Brig, and is their memorial.

And we are ever erecting memorials: tombs, monuments, buildings, societies, stained win-

dows, and whatever else we can devise. It seems natural and right. The school-boy carves his name on a tree or scratches it on a rock, hoping some one may read it when he is gone or after he is far away. The shepherd piles a cairn of stones on the high hill-top; the rich man builds a wing to a college, and the new hall is named after him; the ship-owner calls his best and newest ship after his favorite daughter; and in every way and always men seek and establish memorials of themselves and others.

Now why should not God have his memorial on the earth? Watt, Fulton, and others have theirs in the steam-engine, and Morse in the telegraph. But this is only to the civilized and the intelligent. To a red Indian a steam vessel is only a fire-canoe, and the telegraph a speaking-iron; he knows nothing of the intellects that brought them to perfection. So God has his memorials every-where. The earth as well as the heavens is full of his glory; but it is not observed by men as a

race. Their eyes are shut and their ears are dull ; they neither see nor hear nor know the ever-present God. But there is a memorial that can be known : holy men and women ; converted souls ; born citizens of the heavenly Zion. These are God's epistles, "known and read of all men."

War has been man's memorial. The sanguinary and terrible Attila boasted that "the grass never grew where his horse had set his foot ;" and at this very day the Turkish dominions, in their length and breadth, are a memorial of man's destroying hatred. But

"Nae nicht shall be in heaven, and nae desolatin'
sea,
And nae tyrant-hoofs shall trample i' the city o' the
free."

God's memorial is peace. Instead of hatred shall be love, and kindness shall come for selfishness : "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree : and it shall be

to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Is. 55 : 13).

Away with despair! The earth has been getting better ever since Christ was preached. Every day builds new trophies and memorials of God. God's memorials — redeemed souls on earth, holy men and women, peace, happiness, truth, kindness, brotherhood — are filling and encircling the world. At the height of the Roman Empire some one was dissuaded from provoking the emperor by the argument, Where could he go to be beyond his power? There was not a country where the emperor could not reach him. So the whole earth is the empire of God. The unbeliever is confronted with these memorials of his power and grace at every step.

We can not do the works of God, but we can testify of him. We can not plant ourselves, but we can give ourselves up to the planting of his hand.

"He also serves, who only stands and waits,"

says Milton, and he can be a memorial of God on the earth who becomes by his own consent, but not by his own power, a pleasant and fruitful tree, however lowly, in the garden of God.

E.

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